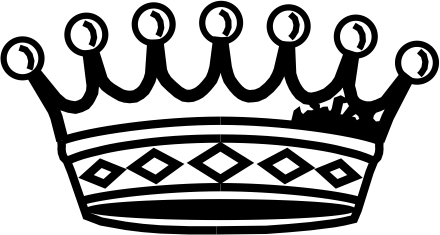
*Golden Crowns Series*

Mullá Ḥusayn

*by*

Lowell Johnson



The National Spiritual Assembly

of the Bahá’ís of South and West Africa

*Johannesburg*

Revised edition, Copyright © 1982 by the

National Spiritual Assembly

of the Bahá’ís of South and West Africa

(Incorporated Association not for Gain)

Extracts from the following works reprinted by permission:

By Bahá’u’lláh: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*

Copyright 1939, 1952, © 1976 by the

National Spiritual Assembly

of the Bahá’ís of the United States;

*The Kitáb-i-Íqán: The Book of Certitude*,

Copyright © 1931, 195o by the

National Spiritual Assembly

of the Bahá’ís of the United States;

by Nabíl-i-A‘ẓam: *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabíl’s Narrative*

*of the Early Days of the Bahá’í Revelation*,

published by the National Spiritual Assembly

of the Bahá’ís of the United States.

Illustrated by Michele Gregory.

Set in 11 on 13 pt Monotype Baskerville by

Monotype Composing Service (Pty.) Ltd., Cape Town

and printed in South Africa by

Budd and Thomson (Pty.) Ltd., Cape Town.

ISBN 0 908420 30 7

**Introduction to the *Golden Crowns* Series**

In these next pages you will read of great sacrifices. Anyone reading

the stories of the early believers in the Bahá’í Faith will wonder why

these people sacrificed so much. What was different about the

Messages of the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh which made ordinary people

rise to the heights of heroism and die gloriously for their Faith?

The teachings of the Báb\* and Bahá’u’lláh† repeat the divine

principles announced by the Prophets of the past. You can read these

teachings in a very small book entitled *The Hidden Words*. It was

written by Bahá’u’lláh. But added to these eternal truths, the Báb

and Bahá’u’lláh have given new teachings never announced by any

Prophet of God before. Here are some of them:

The first teaching of the Bahá’í Faith is that all men belong to one

human family. Speaking to all men, Bahá’u’lláh says, ‘Ye are the

fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch.’ By this He means that

the world of men is like a tree, the nations and peoples are the

different branches of that tree, and the men and women are as the

fruits and blossoms of that tree. In all past religions, the world of

men was divided into two parts—one part known as the people of

the Book of God or the pure tree, and the other known as the lost

people or the evil tree. Bahá’u’lláh has changed this teaching by

announcing that the world is one world and all people in it members

of one family. This is a special teaching of Bahá’u’lláh not to be

found in any other religion. Some people are asleep, He says, and

they need to be awakened; some are sick, they need to be healed;

some are like children, they need to be taught; but all receive the

bounty and gifts of God.

\* The Báb is the title given to the Forerunner of Bahá’u’lláh. He was born in

Shíráz, Írán (Persia) on the 20th of October 1819 and was martyred in Tabríz

Írán on the 9th of July 1850. The ‘Báb’ means the ‘Gate’.

† Bahá’u’lláh is the name of God’s newest Manifestation on earth. He was born

in Tihrán, Írán on the 12th of November 1817 and died near Haifa, Israel on

the 29th of May 1892. ‘Bahá’u’lláh’ means the ‘Glory of God’.

Another new principle in the Bahá’í Faith is the need to investigate

truth. That is to say, no man should blindly follow his ancestors and

forefathers. Each man must see with his own eyes, hear with his own

ears, and investigate truth for himself.

Another teaching is this: that the foundation of all the religions

of God is one. There is only one God. Therefore, there can be only

one religion—the Religion of God. All the past Prophets have taught

the same basic truths, which have all come from the same mouth of

God. This teaching is a new teaching and is special in the Bahá’í

Faith.

A new principle is that religion must be the cause of unity, har-

mony and agreement amongst men. If religion becomes the cause

of disagreement and hatred, if it leads to separation and fighting,

then it would be better if there were no religion in the world.

The Bahá’í Faith also teaches that religion must agree with

science and reason. If it does not agree with science and reason the

it is superstition. Down to the present day it has been the custom for

a man to accept a religious teaching even if it does not agree with

his reason and judgement. The agreement of religious belief with

reason and science opens new windows to the soul of man.

Bahá’u’lláh has taught the equality of men and women. This is

special to the teachings of the Bahá’í Faith, for all other religion

have placed men above women.

A new religious principle is that prejudices, whether religious,

racial, patriotic or political, destroy the solid foundation for a

peaceful life. Therefore, men must overcome their prejudices so that

they can see the underlying truth, that the family of man is one

family and not divided into separate parts.

Universal peace is promised in the Bahá’í teachings. This universal

peace will be accomplished by putting into practice the principles

of Badí’u’lláh. Peace shall come to all nations, governments, people,

religions, races, and all parts of mankind. No other Prophet has

ever promised peace to the world during His ministry, but this is

one of the special teachings of Bahá’u’lláh.

The Báb and Bahá’u’lláh have taught that every man must gain

knowledge and receive an education. It is a religious law in the

Bahá’í Faith that both girls and boys must be educated.

Bahá’u’lláh has set forth the solution and provided the remedy for

the economic question. The solution of the economic problem, He

says, lies in the realm of the spirit. No religious books of the past

Prophets speak of this important human problem.

The greatest new principle of the new religion is the establishment

and appointment of the Centre of the Covenant. This is another

teaching not given by any of the Prophets of the past. Bahá’u’lláh

has appointed a Centre of the Covenant\* to carry on His work and

hold the Bahá’ís together after His passing. When a person becomes

a Bahá’í, he must agree to follow the laws contained in the Covenant.

In this way, Bahá’u’lláh has protected the religion of God against

differences and splits. He has made it impossible for anyone to create

a new sect or faction of belief. To make sure of the unity of the

believers, He has entered into a Covenant with all the people of the

world, including the Interpreter and Explainer of His teachings, so

that no one may interpret or explain the religion of God according

to his own ideas or opinion, and thus create a sect founded upon his

own understanding of the divine words.

These are some of the principles of religion brought by the Báb

and Bahá’u’lláh which are different from the religions of the past.

Thousands of men and women died during the nineteenth century

rather than give up their faith in these teachings. Today, in the

twentieth century, millions of Bahá’ís live their lives so that they

can demonstrate these teachings and bring them to all people,

everywhere.

In the *Golden Crowns* series, Lowell Johnson tells the stories of some

of these early believers who won the crown of martyrdom. One of

these believers was Mullá Ḥusayn. His story now follows.

\* Bahá’u’lláh appointed His eldest Son, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, as the Centre of the

Covenant. He guided the Bahá’ís until He passed away in Haifa, Israel, on the

28th of November 1921. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá means the ‘Servant of Bahá or the

‘Servant of the Glory’.

[Blank page]

Note

*For this edition, these stories have*

*been extensively revised. They may*

*be read aloud effectively, or else*

*used for private reading.*

[Blank page]

# Mullá Ḥusayn

The story of Mullá Ḥusayn begins in the year 1840 in Karbilá, ‘Iráq.

At that time he had already been a student of Siyyid Káẓim for five

years. Siyyid Káẓim was a teacher of the Qur’án who was preparing

the people for the coming of a new Prophet of God.

One day Siyyid Káẓim said to his followers, ‘I wish that one of

you would go to the city of Iṣfahán, and deliver a message to a great

man there named Ḥájí Siyyid Muḥammad Báqir. If one of you can

get him to support our teachings, it will greatly help to spread our

Cause.’ Many times Siyyid Káẓim repeated this request, but no one

offered to make the journey.

At this time Mullá Ḥusayn was only twenty-two years old. He was

one of the youngest of Siyyid Káẓim’s students, but certainly one of

his best. He sat in Siyyid Káẓim’s classes quietly and humbly. He

was always the last one to arrive before each lecture, and the first one

to leave after it was finished. He never stayed after the lecture to as

questions or argue as did many of the others. Ever since childhood he

had studied to gain more knowledge especially about religion and

the subject of law.

One day, in 1840, Siyyid Káẓim again repeated the question to

his students: ‘Will someone arise and take this Message to Ḥájí Siyyid

Muḥammad Báqir in Iṣfahán?’ Still, nobody offered to go, except a

man whom Siyyid Káẓim did not consider intelligent enough to do

it properly. At that moment he turned to Mullá Ḥusayn and said,

‘You are the one I have chosen. Arise and carry out this mission.

With the help of God you will succeed.’

Mullá Ḥusayn was filled with joy! He had been too humble to

offer himself, but when he was called upon to serve God in this way,

he jumped to his feet, kissed the hem of Siyyid Káẓim’s coat, and

immediately left on his journey to Iṣfahán.

In a few days’ time, Siyyid Káẓim received a letter from Mullá

Ḥusayn containing the Ḥájí’s declaration of support. When the

letter was handed to him, he was lecturing to his followers. However,

he read the letter and the declaration to all the men present. He

immediately wrote an answer to Mullá Ḥusayn, and also read that

to his students. In this letter he praised Mullá Ḥusayn so highly for

his service that a few of Siyyid Káẓim’s followers thought that Mullá

Ḥusayn must be the Promised One. The letter was written with such

love and tenderness that it was clear that Siyyid Káẓim was saying

goodbye to Mullá Ḥusayn. He knew that he would never see him

again on this earth. Siyyid Káẓim died on the 31st of December 1843.

It was on the 22nd of January 1844, twenty-two days after the

death of Siyyid Káẓim, that Mullá Ḥusayn returned to Karbilá. For

three days he received visitors at his home, all of whom expressed

their sorrow because of the passing of Siyyid Káẓim. After listening

to their cries he invited the most trusted and outstanding ones to tell

him what Siyyid Káẓim had told them to do before he died. They

told him that Siyyid Káẓim had said over and over, ‘You must

leave your homes, travel far and wide, purify your hearts, and

search for the Promised One. The only way you can find Him is to

search. You must pray to make your hearts pure and search.’

When Mullá Ḥusayn heard these words he said, ‘Then why are

you still here in Karbilá? Why have you not scattered all over the

land? Why have you not followed Siyyid Káẓim’s wish?’

They answered: ‘It is true we have failed. But, we look to your

greatness. We have such confidence in you that if you were to tell

us that you are the Promised One yourself, we would believe it and

obey you in anything you told us to do.’

‘God forbid!’ said Mullá Ḥusayn. ‘I am just dust compared to the

Promised One, the Lord of Lords. If you had really understood the

message of Siyyid Káẓim, you would never have spoken such words!

No! What you must do and what I must do is to arise immediately

to carry out Siyyid Káẓim’s message.’

Suiting his action to his words, Mullá Ḥusayn immediately stood

up and went to deliver this message to other well-known followers of

Siyyid Káẓim. Some of them made excuses that they could not leave

Karbilá at this time, and a few accepted Mullá Ḥusayn’s words as

the truth.

Mullá Ḥusayn, himself, wasted no time. Together with his brother,

Muḥammad-Hasan, and his brother’s son, Muḥammad-Báqir, he

set out for Najaf. On the way to Najaf they stopped at a place for

forty days to fast and pray and purify themselves for their search for

the Báb. Then they went on to Búshihr, on the Persian Gulf.

2

While Mullá Ḥusayn was in Búshihr he seemed to be drawn as if by

a magnet to the north, and so he moved on to Shíráz. As he reached

the gate of the city of Shíráz, he sent his two companions ahead to a

certain mosque telling them to stay there until he joined them later.

‘God willing,’ he said, ‘I will join you there for the evening prayer.

A short time later, while walking outside the gate of Shíráz, Mullá

Ḥusayn suddenly saw a beautiful Youth, who wore a green turban,

coming toward him. The Young Man greeted Mullá Ḥusayn with a

smile of loving welcome. He took Mullá Ḥusayn into His arms as

though he had been a lifelong friend.

At first, Mullá Ḥusayn thought this Person was a follower of

Siyyid Káẓim who had come out from Shíráz to meet him. But then

the Youth invited Mullá Ḥusayn to His home to rest and refresh

himself after his journey. Mullá Ḥusayn tried to excuse himself

saying he had two friends waiting for him and he must go to meet

them. But the Youth said, ‘Commit them to the care of God. He

will surely protect and watch over them.’

Mullá Ḥusayn could not say ‘no’ to this Young Man, and so he

followed Him to the gate of His simple house. The door to the house

was soon opened by an Ethiopian servant, and the Youth said, ‘Enter

therein in peace, secure.’ This is a sentence from the blessed Qur’án,

a saying of the Prophet Muḥammad. Mullá Ḥusayn thought it was

a good sign to hear those words in the first house he entered in

Shíráz, so he was filled with joy and happiness to be there.

As soon as Mullá Ḥusayn was seated, the servant brought a

jug of water, and the Youth invited Mullá Ḥusayn to wash his hands

and feet so he would feel refreshed. Mullá Ḥusayn asked if he could

go into another room to wash himself, but the Young Man refused,

and instead He poured the water over Mullá Ḥusayn’s hands

Himself. Then, He gave Mullá Ḥusayn a cool drink and made some

tea.

After finishing the tea, Mullá Ḥusayn stood up and said, ‘The

time for evening prayer is approaching. I have promised my friends

to join them at that hour at the mosque.’

The Youth was very calm and courteous, but told Mullá Ḥusayn

he must have told his friends he would join them, God willing, but

that it seemed as if God had other plans for him. He told Mullá

Ḥusayn not to worry about keeping his promise. These words made

Mullá Ḥusayn calm and happy, so he prepared for his prayer.

Mullá Ḥusayn and the Young Man stood side by side as they

prayed. This was Mullá Ḥusayn’s prayer: ‘I have tried with all my

soul, O my God, and until now I have failed to find Thy promised

Messenger. I know that Thy word will not fail, and that Thy

promise is sure.’

After the prayers were finished, the Youth asked Mullá Ḥusayn

whom he regarded as his new leader now that Siyyid Káẓim had

passed away.

Mullá Ḥusayn said, ‘Siyyid Káẓim told all his followers to leave

their homes and travel everywhere and look for the Promised One.

The Youth then asked Mullá Ḥusayn if his teacher had given him

any signs by which he would know the Promised One.

Mullá Ḥusayn answered, ‘Yes, Siyyid Káẓim said that the

Promised One would be a pure descendant of the Prophet Mu-

ḥammad, and of the family of Fáṭimih. He would be more than

twenty and less than thirty years old. He would have knowledge

without having studied. He would be of medium height, would not

smoke, and would be physically perfect.’

There was a silence for a while, and then the Young Man said

with a strong voice: ‘Behold, all these signs are manifest in Me!’ He

then repeated each of these signs of the Promised One, and showed

how each one was true about Himself. But Mullá Ḥusayn did not at

first believe. He remembered what Siyyid Káẓim had told him, that

the Promised One would be a very holy man, very wise, with more

knowledge than any other person on earth. He told the Young Man

what Siyyid Káẓim had said, but as soon as he said it, he became very

sorry and very afraid. However, Mullá Ḥusayn had decided when he

started his search, that he would test the Promised One in two ways:

the Promised One must reveal an explanation of a part of the

Qur’án known as the Súrih of Joseph without being asked to do so,

and must explain a book which Mullá Ḥusayn had written.

Although Mullá Ḥusayn was very afraid, he asked the Young Man

to read his book and explain it to him. The Young Man happily

looked at parts of the book, closed it, and then spoke to Mullá

Ḥusayn. Within a few minutes, He had explained all the ideas and

answered all the questions in it. Then, before Mullá Ḥusayn could

answer, the Young Man said, ‘Now is the time to reveal the com-

mentary on the Súrih of Joseph.’

Mullá Ḥusayn needed no further proof. He just sat there before the

Young Man watching Him write His explanation, and listening to

His beautiful words. When the Young Man had finished, He told

Mullá Ḥusayn that it is for God to test His servants and not for His

servants to judge God by their own poor standards. He told Mullá

Ḥusayn that if he had not been His guest, he would have been in

great danger, but the grace of God had saved him. He went on to say

that in this Day, all the peoples and nations of the earth, both in the

East and the West, should hurry to His door and ask for help from

God, the Merciful. Whoever hesitated would be lost. Then the Young

Man said that everyone should arise sincerely and of their own

accord as Mullá Ḥusayn had done, to go out and look for their

promised Beloved with determination.

Mullá Ḥusayn’s head was going round and round from all he

had heard. He felt he had to rise, and he begged to leave. But the

Young Man smiled and told him that if he left then, whoever saw

him would say, ‘This poor youth has lost his mind.’

At that moment the clock showed two hours and eleven minutes

after sunset, on the evening of the 22nd of May 1844. The Young

Man turned to Mullá Ḥusayn and said, ‘This night, this very hour

will, in the days to come, be celebrated as one of the greatest and

most significant of all festivals. Render thanks to God for having

graciously assisted you to attain your heart’s desire, …’

About forty-five minutes later, the Young Man ordered dinner to

be served. The holy food refreshed Mullá Ḥusayn’s body, and his

soul as well. During the meal and after it, the Young Man continued

to talk. Mullá Ḥusayn sat and listened, completely forgetting the

time. Suddenly he heard the call to morning prayer, and Mullá

Ḥusayn realized that they had talked the whole night long without

stopping. They had not become tired. For the first time, Mullá

Ḥusayn knew what it was to have peace. He only thought, ‘Peace!

Peace! Glory be to Thee, O God! Peace! Praise be to God, Lord of

all creatures!’

Then the Young Man spoke these words to Mullá Ḥusayn: ‘O thou

who art the first to believe in Me! Verily, I say, I am the Báb, the

Gate of God, and thou art the Bábu’l-Báb, the gate of that Gate.

Eighteen souls must, in the beginning, spontaneously and of their

own accord, accept Me and recognize the truth of My Revelation.

Unwarned and uninvited, each of these must seek independently to

find Me. And when their number is complete, one of them must

needs be chosen to accompany Me on My pilgrimage to Mecca and

Medina. There I shall deliver the Message of God to the Sharíf of

Mecca.’\*

The Báb then told Mullá Ḥusayn not to tell any of his friends

what he had seen and heard that night, that he must go to the

mosque and pray, that the Báb would join him for prayers later, and

that Mullá Ḥusayn must pretend not to know Him. He must keep

\* The Sharíf of Mecca was the Keeper of the Most Holy House of the Muslim

Religion.

his experience a secret until they leave the city. Then the Báb said,

‘Ere we depart, we shall appoint unto each of the eighteen souls his

special mission, and shall send them forth to accomplish their task.

We shall instruct them to teach the Word of God and to quicken the

souls of men.’

When the Báb had finished this speech, He asked Mullá Ḥusayn

to leave, and He entrusted him to the care of God.

3

Have you ever wondered what it must have been like to be the first

believer in a new religion? This is what Mullá Ḥusayn felt. He said:

‘This Message, which was given to me so suddenly and without

any preparation, came like a clap of thunder. For a while I could

neither see, nor feel, nor hear. It was too great to be true. I could not

realize what had happened. I became excited and happy. Before, I

had been weak and powerless. I could not walk or write, my hands

and feet shook. But then, I became glad and strong. I felt that I had

so much courage and power that, even if all the world were to rise

up against me, I would be able to meet any attack or difficulty. The

world and all things seemed like a handful of dust in my grasp.’

Mullá Ḥusayn seemed to be like the voice of the angel Gabriel,

calling all mankind to awake, because the morning light had broken,

and telling them to arise, because His Cause was made clear, and the

gate of God’s grace was wide open. Mullá Ḥusayn seemed to be

saying, ‘enter therein, O peoples of the world! For He who is your

Promised One is come!’

This is the way Mullá Ḥusayn felt when he left the home of the

Báb on that wonderful day. It was in this condition that he joined his

brother and his nephew at the mosque. A large number of people had

gathered there to greet him. But, although he was burning to tell

everyone the wonderful news, he obeyed the Báb’s command and

did not tell anyone of his experiences. Instead, he said his prayers and

began to organize classes as he was told to do.

More and more people started to come to Mullá Ḥusayn’s classes.

He did not tell them about the Báb, but he did tell them many other

things to awaken their hearts. So beautifully did he speak that even

the religious leaders and city officials came to hear him. He had never

spoken so well. His speeches were filled with the new spirit which the

Báb had given to him.

During those days the Báb invited him to come and visit Him

several tunes. The Báb would send His servant to the mosque with a

loving message of welcome, and each time Mullá Ḥusayn would

spend the rest of the night with the Báb. While Mullá Ḥusayn

listened, the hours would fly by without being noticed, and daylight

would come too soon.

On one of these nightly visits, the Báb said, ‘Tomorrow thirteen

of your companions will arrive. To each of them extend the utmost

loving-kindness. Leave them not to themselves, for they have

dedicated their lives to the quest of their Beloved. Pray to God that

He may graciously enable them to walk securely in that path which is

finer than a hair and keener than a sword. Certain ones among them

will be accounted, in the sight of God, as His chosen and favoured

disciples. As to others, they will tread the middle way. The fate of the

rest will remain undeclared until the hour when all that is hidden

shall be made manifest.’

On that same morning, at sunrise, soon after Mullá Ḥusayn had

arrived at the mosque, thirteen men came, as the Báb had promised.

One night a few days later, Mullá ‘Alí, the leader of the group,

could not keep quiet any longer. He said to Mullá Ḥusayn, ‘You

know how much we trust you. If you were to say that you were the

Promised One yourself, we would certainly believe you. Because of

you, we have left our homes in search of the Beloved. You have set

the example. We have followed in your footsteps. We have followed

you to this place, and we are ready to accept whomever you accept

as the Promised One, and we are ready for all the troubles it may

bring to us.

‘Now we are here with you, and we see you teaching the people

Mullá Ḥusayn explains to Mullá

‘Alí why he now appears

so calm and happy.

[Illustration]

and saying your prayers in perfect peace, and you do not seem to be

looking for the Promised One any longer. Please tell us why, so that

we may understand.’

Mullá Ḥusayn spoke to him gently, because he knew what was

in their hearts. ‘Your friends,’ he said, ‘probably feel that I am at

peace because I have become well known and successful in this city.

The truth is far from that. Success in this world is of no interest to me.

Mullá Ḥusayn is only interested in his Beloved. Ever since the

beginning of my search I have promised God that I would give my

life for His Cause. Not until I shed my blood for His name will the

fire that is within me be stopped. I pray to God that you will live to

see that day.

‘I wonder if your friends have not thought that perhaps God has

opened the Gate for Mullá Ḥusayn, and because he is not able to tell

anyone, he prays and holds classes.’

These last words awakened the soul of Mullá ‘Alí. He knew what

they meant immediately. Tears filled his eyes, and he begged Mullá

Ḥusayn to tell him Who the Promised One was. But Mullá Ḥusayn

said to him, ‘Please, you must not ask me this question. Let your trust

be in God, for He will surely guide your steps, and satisfy the excite-

ment in your heart.’

Mullá ‘Alí hurried to his friends and told them about his con-

versation with Mullá Ḥusayn. The news set their hearts on fire, and

they immediately went to their rooms to fast and pray, so that they

could be able to recognize their Beloved.

On the third night of his prayers, Mullá ‘Alí had a vision. Before

his eyes came a light, and the light moved off ahead of him. As the

light moved forward, he followed it, and in his dream he came to the

arms of his promised Beloved. He awoke in the middle of the night

from his dream, radiant with joy and gladness. He hurried to the

room of Mullá Ḥusayn and threw himself into his arms. Mullá

Ḥusayn lovingly embraced him and said: ‘Praise be to God Who

hath guided us here. If God had not guided us, we would not have

been guided.’

At the break of day, Mullá Ḥusayn and Mullá ‘Alí hurried to the

home of the Báb. The door of His house was already open, and the

Báb’s servant was there to greet them. He recognized them imme-

diately and said, ‘Before the break of day, my Master told me to

open the door of the house and stand ready at the entrance. “Two

guests”, He said, “are to arrive early this morning. Extend to them

in My name a loving welcome. Say to them from Me: ‘Enter therein

in the name of God.’”’

Mullá ‘Alí was then brought into the presence of his Beloved Báb

for the first time, and his happiness and joy was as Mullá Ḥusayn’s

had been a few days before. Everything in the room seemed to say,

‘Verily, verily, the dawn of a new Day has broken.’

During the next few days each of the twelve companions of Mullá

‘Alí looked for and found his Beloved. Some had experiences while

asleep, some while awake, a few whilst in prayer, and others while in

deep thought. Each in his own way was led to recognize the power of

God’s glory. Each of them came to Mullá Ḥusayn with great joy and

happiness, and he led them to the presence of the Báb.

4

One night while the Báb was talking to Mullá Ḥusayn, He said:

‘Seventeen Letters have thus far enlisted under the standard of the

Faith of God. There remains one more to complete the number.

These Letters of the Living shall arise to proclaim My Cause and to

establish My Faith. Tomorrow night the remaining Letter will

arrive and will complete the number of My chosen disciples.’

The next day, in the evening, Muḥammad-‘Alí, later named

Quddús, became the last Letter of the Living by recognizing the

Báb as He walked with Mullá Ḥusayn outside the gate of the city of

Shíráz.\*

One of the chosen Eighteen Letters of the Living was a woman

named Ṭáhirih. She never met the Báb, but she recognized Him in a

\* The story of Quddús is told in another booklet in this series.

dream and sent Him a letter which proved to Him that she was

worthy to be considered a Letter of the Living.\*

After the Eighteen Letters of the Living had found the Báb, He

Himself became the Nineteenth. He then called them into His

presence, and gave each of them a special command and a special

duty. He spoke some inspiring words to them before parting. Mullá

Ḥusayn had thought that he would be the one chosen by the Báb to

go with Him on His pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, but the Báb

chose Quddús instead. Mullá Ḥusayn was disappointed, but the Báb

had saved Mullá Ḥusayn for another purpose.

The Báb told Mullá Ḥusayn not to be unhappy because he was

not chosen to go on pilgrimage with Him. Instead, he was to go to the

city which held a Mystery more holy than anything in Ḥijáz or

Shíráz. His task would be to open the eyes of the non-believers and,

with the help of God, to make their minds clean. The Báb promised

that he would be given great power and that God’s angels would

protect him. God’s almighty arms would surround him and His

unfailing spirit would guide him. Finally, the Báb said: ‘He that

loves you loves God; and whoever opposes you, has opposed God.

Who befriends you, him will God befriend; and whoso rejects you,

him will God reject.’

With these wonderful words in his ears Mullá Ḥusayn started on

his special task. Wherever he went, to whatever group of people he

talked, he told the great Message of the Promised One without fear.

When he spoke to the people he told them that a great new religious

teacher had appeared, and that He had written a book which was

very much like the Holy Qur’án. When people said that that was not

such a wonderful thing, he said, ‘Show me another man who can do

the same, if you are men who speak the truth. The day is soon coming

when this whole city will accept His Cause.’

When the Muslim clergy in the city of Iṣfahán heard these sayings

of Mullá Ḥusayn, they immediately became angry and afraid. They

did not believe that anyone could ever be as great as Muḥammad,

\* The story of Ṭáhirih is told in another booklet in this series.

nor that any book could ever be as great as the Holy Qur’án. They

were angry because Mullá Ḥusayn had said this, and they were

afraid because many people might believe Mullá Ḥusayn and leave

the Muslim Faith. Therefore, the clergy went to the government

officials and told them lies, and tried to have Mullá Ḥusayn stopped

from teaching.

At first, the officials of the city paid no attention to the clergy.

Instead, they told them to be wise and listen to Mullá Ḥusayn:

perhaps what he said was true. Mullá Ḥusayn, therefore, was able to

teach his new Faith for a long time without being stopped. However,

in the whole city of Iṣfahán, only one man was found who recognized

the Truth at once. He was a simple sifter of wheat. (A few years later

when he heard the news about the battle of Shaykh Ṭabarsí, he ran

to join the men in the Fort. As he ran through the city of Iṣfahán,

he carried his sieve. People tried to stop him, and asked, ‘Why are

you in such a hurry?’ And he said, ‘I hurry to help the Bábís defend

themselves at the Fort of Shaykh Ṭabarsí. I carry this sieve with me

to sift the people in each city through which I pass. Whoever I find

ready to join me in this Faith, I will invite them to hurry with me to

the field of martyrdom.’) So glorious was the action of this young

man, a sifter, that the Báb wrote about him in His Holy Book, the

Bayán.

5

It was in Tihrán that Mullá Ḥusayn discovered the ‘Mystery which

is more holy than anything in Ḥijáz or Shíráz.’ This is the way it

happened:

One day, while Mullá Ḥusayn was talking to a great teacher of the

Qur’án, one of his students overheard the conversation and came to

see Mullá Ḥusayn in his room in the middle of the night. Mullá

Ḥusayn asked the man, ‘What is your name, and which city is your

home?’

‘My name’, he said, ‘is Mullá Muḥammad, and my surname is

Mu‘allim. My home is Núr, in the province of Mázindarán.’

‘Tell me,’ said Mullá Ḥusayn, ‘does the family of Mírzá Buzurg

live there? And does any member of his family have as fine a

character, intelligence, and charm as his late father?’

‘Yes,’ said Mullá Muḥammad, ‘among his sons now living there is

One Who is very much like His father. He lives a beautiful life filled

with love and kindness. He is generous and highly intelligent.’

‘What is His occupation?’ asked Mullá Ḥusayn.

‘He makes sad people happy and feeds the hungry’, was the

answer.

‘What about His rank or position?’

‘He has none’, said the student. ‘He only helps the poor and makes

friends with the stranger.’

‘What is His name?’

‘His name is Ḥusayn-‘Alí.’

‘How does he spend His time?’ asked Mullá Ḥusayn.

‘He walks in the woods, and enjoys the beauty of the countryside.’

‘What is His age?’

‘Twenty-eight.’

During this conversation, Mullá Ḥusayn became more and more

excited. Soon you will see the reason why. Before Mullá Muḥammad

left, Mullá Ḥusayn asked, ‘I suppose you often see Him?’

‘Yes,’ he answered, ‘I often visit His home.’

‘Then, will you deliver into His hands a parcel from me?’

‘I would be happy to’, he said.

Mullá Ḥusayn then took some of the Báb’s Writings which were

rolled up in a piece of cloth. He asked Mullá Muḥammad to give it

to Ḥusayn-‘Alí in person at the hour of dawn. If Ḥusayn-‘Alí wanted

to send a message back, Mullá Muḥammad must bring it to him.

Of course, you know who Ḥusayn-‘Alí was. He was later known as

Bahá’u’lláh. When Mullá Muḥammad delivered the parcel to

Bahá’u’lláh, Bahá’u’lláh read the Báb’s Writings, and turning to His

brother, Mírzá Músá, said: ‘Verily, I say, whoso believes in the

Qur’án and recognizes its Divine origin, and yet hesitates, though it

Mullá Ḥusayn asks: ‘Will you

deliver into His hands

a parcel from me?’

[Illustration]

be for a moment, to admit that these soul-stirring words are endowed

with the same regenerating power, has most assuredly erred in his

judgement and has strayed far from the path of justice.’ He said no

more. But He sent Mullá Ḥusayn a gift of a loaf of Russian sugar and

a package of tea and a message of love and thanks. In those days, tea

and sugar were very scarce in Írán. In this way, Bahá’u’lláh showed

Mullá Ḥusayn how precious He considered the Message which He

had received.

When Mullá Muḥammad returned to Mullá Ḥusayn with the tea

and the sugar, Mullá Ḥusayn understood. He jumped to his feet,

received the gift with his head bowed low, and kissed it. Then, he

took Mullá Muḥammad into his arms, kissed his eyes, and said,

‘My dearly beloved friend! I pray that God will give you happiness

forever, and fill your heart with a gladness that will never die.’

A few days later Mullá Ḥusayn left Tihrán for Khurásán. As he

said goodbye to Mullá Muḥammad, he said, ‘You must not tell

anyone what you have seen and heard. Let this be a secret in your

heart. Do not tell anyone His name, because someone will try to hurt

Him. When you are praying, pray that God will protect Him. Our

duty is to tell everyone about this New Day. Many people will die

for this Cause in this very city. But that blood will water the Tree of

God, will cause it to grow, and shelter all people in every part of the

world.’

Happy because of his experience with Bahá’u’lláh, Mullá Ḥusayn

taught the people of Khurásán even better than at any other time.

He was such a strong teacher, that he even brought the chief of the

Muslim religion in Khurásán into the Bábí Faith, as well as many,

many others. For a while, it seemed as if the whole of Mashhad, the

main city of Khurásán, would accept the Báb.

After a time, Mullá Ḥusayn decided that it was time to send a

message to the Báb telling Him everything that had happened on his

first teaching trip for the Faith. In his report he listed all the names

of the people who had accepted the Faith, and told the story about

how the Message was delivered to Bahá’u’lláh.

When the Báb received the message from Mullá Ḥusayn, it was

one of the greatest holy days in the Muslim Faith. Only Quddús was

with Him to share the news. Both Quddús and the Báb were filled

with joy and happiness by the report. The Báb seemed to be the

happiest Quddús had ever seen Him, and the reason was very clear.

The Báb now felt sure that even if He were killed immediately, the

Cause of God would continue and grow through the work of

Bahá’u’lláh. From that moment on, the Báb was filled with a new

spirit and new hope.

After receiving Mullá Ḥusayn’s letter, the Báb decided it was time

for Him to make His pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina. This was in

September 1844.

Mullá Ḥusayn continued his teaching in the city of Mashhad.

6

Before the Báb had left on his pilgrimage, He had told His friends

that He would return by way of ‘Iráq, and would stop in the city of

Karbilá. Therefore, as Naw-Rúz\* of 1845 came near, many Bábís

gathered in Karbilá to welcome Him. Soon after Naw-Rúz, however,

they received a message from Him that He had had to change His

plans. He had gone directly to His home in Shíráz. He asked all

those who wished to see Him to travel to Iṣfahán, to the north of

Shíráz, and wait there for further instructions. This the faithful one

did. On the way, they met Mullá Ḥusayn, who travelled with them.

After a few days in Iṣfahán, the news came to them that Shíráz

was greatly upset by the Báb’s arrival, and it was dangerous for

anyone to enter the city to see Him. When Mullá Ḥusayn heard this,

he was in no way put off. He quietly told a few of his companions

what he was going to do. He took off his robes and his turban, and

put on the clothes worn by the people of a different part of Írán.

Making himself look like a horseman, he and his brother and nephew

set out at an unexpected hour for Shíráz.

\* New Year in those countries: 21 March.

As they came near to the gate of Shíráz, Mullá Ḥusayn told his

brother to enter the city in the dark of night and go straight to the

Báb’s uncle and ask him to tell the Báb that they had arrived. On the

next day, Mullá Ḥusayn received the happy news that the Báb’s

uncle would meet him outside the gate of the city an hour after

sunset. That night the Báb’s uncle met Mullá Ḥusayn at the time

arranged, and took him to his home safely. Several times, the Báb

came at night to visit Mullá Ḥusayn at His uncle’s home. They

stayed together the entire night and spoke of many things. In a few

days’ time, the Báb gave Mullá Ḥusayn permission to invite the

believers from Iṣfahán to come to Shíráz gradually, find places to

live in the city as travellers, and take whatever jobs they could find

Some of those who came to Shíráz to see the Báb were not very

strong believers in His Faith. They thought that by becoming Báb’s

they would be given special favours and power. When they saw that

the Báb had chosen Mullá Ḥusayn as His favourite disciple at that

time, they became very jealous. They started to whisper things

against Mullá Ḥusayn to his companions. These whisperings did not

affect Mullá Ḥusayn’s companions in any way, however, except to

make them stay away from those who were trying to make the

trouble. Little by little, the trouble-makers found that they were no

longer part of the faithful group, so they pulled themselves away

completely and joined the enemies of the Báb in Shíráz. They caused

so much trouble in the city that in the end the city authorities force

them to leave. But this did not stop their jealousy or their plans.

Soon, the people of Shíráz began to protest because Mullá Ḥusayn

had come back, so much so, that the Báb finally had to ask all His

followers except one to leave the city. When the believers left, the

Báb had a quiet time for a while, and some wonderful souls became

believers. But in time, many people began coming to the Báb again,

and the clergy and the enemies convinced the Government of Írán

that the Báb must either be put in prison or killed. The Government

decided to put Him in prison. And so, in June 1847 the Báb was sent

to the prison of Máh-Kú in the mountains of north-western Írán.

When the Báb sent His followers out of Shíráz, He told Mullá

Ḥusayn to go back to Khurásán to continue his teaching. Early in

1848, he decided lie must visit the Báb in prison, so he left Mashhad

and started to walk to Tihrán. Some of his fiends tried to give him a

horse and a carriage to make the journey easier, but he said., ‘I have

promised God that I would walk the whole distance which separates

me from my Beloved.’ He even tried to get his servant, Qambar-‘Alí,

to return to Mashhad, but He refused. So, together they walked the

entire distance of hundreds of kilometres.

On his way to Máh-Kú, Mullá Ḥusayn went through many towns.

In each town he was greeted by the happy believers. When he

reached Tihrán, he showed such a fine character and love for the

Faith that people said that even if no one else were to help him, he

would be able to establish the Faith in Írán by himself. The greatest

thing which happened to Mullá Ḥusayn in Tihrán was his meeting

with Bahá’u’lláh. He was taken to visit Bahá’u’lláh very quietly, and

nobody knows what Bahá’u’lláh told him in that interview.

From the meeting with Bahá’u’lláh, Mullá Ḥusayn went on to the

prison of Máh-Kú to see the Báb. He arrived there on the evening

of the fourth Naw-Rúz after the declaration of the Báb. Mullá

Ḥusayn was met near the prison by ‘Alí Khán, the prison-keeper.

‘Alí Khán had brought a horse for Mullá Ḥusayn to ride the rest of

the way, but Mullá Ḥusayn told him, ‘No, I have promised God that

I would make the whole of my journey on foot.’ So, Mullá Ḥusayn

walked up the mountain to visit the holy Prisoner in His prison.

Until this time, the Báb had not been allowed to have any visitors

spend the night with Him in the prison, but ‘Alí Khán was so im-

pressed with Mullá Ḥusayn that he said to the Báb, ‘If it is Your wish

to have Mullá Ḥusayn stay with You this night, I am ready to let

him stay, as I have no will of nay own. No matter how long You want

him to stay with You, I will carry out Your command.’ This is how

the Báb was able to have Mullá Ḥusayn with Him on the fourth

Naw-Rúz after His declaration, and for nine days after that.

During Mullá Ḥusayn’s stay with the Báb, more and more disciples

[Illustration]

began to arrive, and they were immediately brought to the Báb

without any trouble. The Báb spoke many beautiful things to Mullá

Ḥusayn during those wonderful days, and Mullá Ḥusayn was very

happy again. He also received many instructions from the Báb,

telling him all the things that were going to happen in the future. The

last words the Báb said to Mullá Ḥusayn were, ‘A few days after your

departure from this place, they will transfer Us to another mountain.

Ere you arrive at your destination, the news of Our departure from

Máh-Kú will have reached you.’

Mullá Ḥusayn started on his journey to Mázindarán, as com-

manded by the Báb.

The words of the Báb about His transfer were true. Someone from

Máh-Kú sent a report to the Government telling them that ‘Alí

Khán was too friendly to the Báb, and that day and night more and

more people were coming to visit Him. The report even said that

‘Alí Khán wanted his daughter to marry the Báb, but the Báb had

refused. Naturally, when Ḥájí Mírzá Áqásí, the Chief Minister,

heard this, he ordered the Báb to be sent to an even worse prison

the Castle of Chihríq.

On his way to Mázindarán, Mullá Ḥusayn passed through many

towns and villages. He stopped in every one of them, gathered the

faithful believers together, gave them the Báb’s love and greetings,

and inspired them to increase their teaching and remain strong in

His way. In Tihrán, Mullá Ḥusayn again had the privilege of being

with Bahá’u’lláh for a short time. From Bahá’u’lláh he received the

courage and strength to carry him through the last difficult days of

his life.

7

From Tihrán, Mullá Ḥusayn went to Mázindarán where he was to

have a promise of the Báb fulfilled. In the Prison at Máh-Kú, the

Báb had told Mullá Ḥusayn that in Mázindarán there was a hidden

treasure which would become revealed to him and would show him

Mullá Ḥusayn’s

approach to

Máh-Kú.

what he was supposed to do to further the work of the Faith. In

Mázindarán, Mullá Ḥusayn visited Quddús in the town of Bárfurúsh.

He was greeted lovingly by Quddús, who did his best to make his

guest comfortable. Quddús even washed Mullá Ḥusayn’s feet which

were dusty and blistered from the journey. He gave Mullá Ḥusayn

the seat of honour at the table and introduced him with great

reverence to each of the believers.

After dinner, when all the guests had left, Mullá Ḥusayn and

Quddús had a long talk. Mullá Ḥusayn told Quddús all the wonderful

things that had happened when he was with the Báb. Then he said,

‘But He gave me no definite directions about what I should do next to

teach the Cause. He told me that in Mázindarán a hidden treasure

could be revealed to me, and I would know what to do. From His

words, I understood that I would never see Him again, and that I

would sacrifice my unworthy self in His path. He said to me, “The

Feast of Sacrifice is fast approaching. Arise and gird up the loins of

endeavour, and let nothing detain you from achieving your destiny.

Having attained your destination, prepare yourself to receive Us, for

We too shall ere long follow you.”’

Quddús then showed Mullá Ḥusayn some writing, and asked him

to read it. Mullá Ḥusayn read it, and said, ‘I realize that the Author

of these words received them from God, and I accept their truth

without any question whatever.’ He then looked at Quddús and

knew that Quddús had written them himself. He immediately arose

and stood before Quddús with bowed head and said, ‘Quddús is the

hidden treasure which the Báb promised I would find.. Although my

Master is now in prison in the mountains of Ádharbáyján, the

reflection of His glory now stands before me.’ This is the way Mullá

Ḥusayn recognized in Quddús a sign of the Báb. And this is the way

the Báb raised up His helpers, even while He was hundreds of

kilometres away in prison. No power can stop the greatest power -

the Power of God.

Mullá Ḥusayn was a very unusual young man. He was well

educated, had a wide knowledge and a beautiful character. Many of

the disciples of Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Káẓim thought he was

the person to become the Promised One. On the night that Mullá

Ḥusayn first met the Báb he thought that he was greater in education

than the Báb. But he had such a pure heart and clear understanding

that he was able to see the perfect beauty in the Báb, although the

Báb was the son of a little-known merchant of Shíráz. Later, when

many Bábís looked to Mullá Ḥusayn as the most important person

next to the Báb, Mullá Ḥusayn kept his purity and recognized in

Quddús an even greater soul than his own. How many of us would

be able to do that?

When Mullá Ḥusayn read the writings of Quddús he gave himself

completely to the service of Quddús. He promised Quddús that he

would follow in his footsteps, obey his commands, and in every way

make him comfortable and keep him safe. And, until the hour of his

martyrdom, Mullá Ḥusayn kept his promise.

8

The next morning when the visitors came to see Mullá Ḥusayn, they

were surprised to find him waiting on Quddús. The night before

when they had been there for dinner, Mullá Ḥusayn had been the

guest of honour; he was served by Quddús. This morning Mullá

Ḥusayn had given his seat of honour to Quddús and was only Quddús’

servant. When the guests were all gathered together, the first words

Quddús spoke to Mullá Ḥusayn, so all could hear, were: ‘Now, at

this very hour, you should arise, go and speak to the Sa‘ídu’l-‘Ulamá’,

the Chief Priest, and then go to Khurásán. In the town of Mashhad,

you should build a house in which we can live and receive guests at

the same time. To this house you will invite every pure soul, and we

shall prepare them to join together and teach the Cause of God.’

Mullá Ḥusayn went to the Sa‘ídu’l-‘Ulamá’ and spoke to him in

front of his pupils about the New Day. But the Priest was blind to the

Truth and angry at Mullá Ḥusayn.

Alone, and detached from everything but God, Mullá Ḥusayn set

out on his journey to Mashhad. Mullá Ḥusayn’s only companion on

this journey was the thought of carrying out the wishes of Quddús

and fulfilling the promise he had made.

Immediately after he arrived in Mashhad, he bought a piece of

land and built the house Quddús had commanded him to build. He

named the house the Bábíyyih, after the Báb. Working as a team,

Mullá Ḥusayn and Quddús taught so many Bábís and sent them out

to teach that great excitement filled the city of Mashhad. After a few

months, Quddús left to take part in a conference at Badasht, leaving

Mullá Ḥusayn to carry on the teaching in Mashhad alone. So many

people became followers of the Báb that the government officials and

the clergy became angry once again. Eventually, the number of

Bábís in Mashhad became so great that Mullá Ḥusayn was asked by

the authorities to leave the city.

Before Mullá Ḥusayn left Mashhad, hundreds of people came to

the Bábíyyih to say goodbye. Many of them begged him to let them

go with him on this journey. Mothers bought their sons, and sisters

their brothers. With tears in their eyes they asked him to take them

along as a sacrifice to the Almighty. By the time he was ready to

leave, two hundred and two men had joined him for the journey. Just

before leaving Mashhad, a messenger came to Mullá Ḥusayn from

the Báb. The messenger carried two things, a letter and the turban

of the Báb. He also carried the news that the Báb had given him a

new name, Siyyid ‘Alí. The message said that he should place upon

his head the Báb’s green turban, which was the sign of His family,

and that he must carry the Black Standard (a black flag) in front of

him, and hurry to give help to the Báb’s beloved Quddús. Quddús,

at this time, had been imprisoned in the home of a relative and was

unable to teach.

As soon as the news reached him, Mullá Ḥusayn gathered his two

hundred and two companions together, raised the Black Standard,

placed the Báb’s green turban on his head, climbed on his horse, and

gave the command to march. His men joyfully followed him. This

took place on the 21st of July 1848.

9

As Mullá Ḥusayn and his followers went through each town, they

bravely told everyone about the New Day. They invited people to

follow the Báb and join the march on the way to help Quddús. On

the way, Mullá Ḥusayn stopped for three days at a small town so that

everyone could rest. On the third day, he said to his followers, ‘If

there is anyone here who is not prepared to suffer greatly for this

Cause, he should now turn back and return to his home.’ He repeated

these words several times. Finally, he said, ‘Soon I, together with

seventy-two of you men, shall suffer death for the sake of our Beloved.

If you are afraid to die for the Cause, you must leave immediately.

Later, there will be no chance to escape.’ So terrible did Mullá

Ḥusayn make the future sound to his men that twenty of them

decided to return to their homes.

In Bárfurúsh, the news was received that Mullá Ḥusayn and his

men were coming near. The Sa‘ídu’l-‘Ulamá’ in that town had hated

Mullá Ḥusayn since he had told him of the Báb. As soon as he heard

the news, he hurried to the mosque and called all of his followers to

hear him. The Muslims of Bárfurúsh gathered at the mosque, and

when they were all together, they listened to their leader. The priest

threw his turban on the ground, tore open the neck of his shirt, and

started to speak.

‘Awake!’ he said. ‘The enemies of Muḥammad are marching

toward the city. They will wipe out everything that we love about

our holy Faith. We must fight them. If we do not fight, they will kill

all of us. The man who is the head of these killers, Mullá Ḥusayn,

came one day to my class. He paid no attention to what I was

saying and he insulted me in front of my own disciples. When I

refused to agree with him, he became angry and said he would force

me to accept his ideas in the future. Now he is coming. His men are

near the gates of the city. It is the duty of all the people of Bárfurúsh,

both young and old, both men and women, to collect every gun and

knife, stick and stone, and fight against these dangerous men.

Tomorrow, at the hour of dawn, you must kill every man in Mullá

Ḥusayn’s company.’

So afraid were the people of Bárfurúsh that they would be killed

by Mullá Ḥusayn that they prepared to fight. They did not know

that Mullá Ḥusayn and his men wanted only to pass through their

town peacefully and tell them about the coming of the Promised

One. No! They believed their leader without thinking, and prepared

themselves to kill.

Mullá Ḥusayn knew what was going to happen next. He knew the

Sa‘ídu’l-‘Ulamá’ in Bárfurúsh, and he knew that he was a trouble-

maker. This Muslim chief was still jealous of Mullá Ḥusayn because

Mullá Ḥusayn was such an intelligent man and had proved to him

that the Báb was the Promised One. But the Sa‘ídu’l-‘Ulamá’ was

an ambitious and cruel man. He did not want to follow anyone. He

only wanted to be a leader.

As they approached the town, Mullá Ḥusayn told his companions

that they must now throw away everything they owned, except their

horses and their swords. He knew the people of Bárfurúsh were afraid

he and his men would want to kill them and rob them. So he said:

‘Leave behind all your belongings, and be content with your horses

and swords, so that all may see that you have no interest in earthly

things, and that you have no desire to guard your own property,

much less to covet the property of others!’ About five kilometres

from the town, they were suddenly attacked. People with guns began

to shoot at them. Six of Mullá Ḥusayn’s men were hit immediately.

One of them called to Mullá Ḥusayn, ‘Beloved leader, we have come

with you for no other reason than to sacrifice ourselves for the Cause.

But, please, let us defend ourselves.’

But Mullá Ḥusayn said, ‘The time has not yet come. The number

is not yet complete.’ At that moment a bullet hit Siyyid Riḍá in the

chest and killed him instantly. Siyyid Riḍá was a man of pure and

simple ways, a strong believer, and Mullá Ḥusayn’s closest helper.

Siyyid Riḍá had walked all the way from Mashhad alongside Mullá

Ḥusayn’s horse so he would be ready to help him at a moment’s

notice. When Mullá Ḥusayn saw his dear companion fall, he raised

his eyes to heaven and prayed: ‘Behold, O God, my God, the trouble

which we have come into, and see what kind of a welcome we have

received from these people. We have come for no other reason than

to teach them the way of Truth. You have always commanded us to

protect our lives against the enemy. We will now follow Thy com-

mand, and fight to protect ourselves.’

With these words, he took hold of his sword and began to defend

himself. He rode into the middle of the enemy without fear. Mullá

Ḥusayn was a slender man, not very strong, whose hand even

trembled when he wrote. But, on that day, he showed such strength

that only God could have given it to him. He went after the man who

had killed his beloved Siyyid Riḍá. The soldier was running away to

hide, but Mullá Ḥusayn followed him on his horse. The soldier hid

himself behind a tree, and also tried to protect himself with his gun.

But, Mullá Ḥusayn rushed forward, and with one stroke of the sword

he cut through the trunk of the tree, the barrel of the soldier’s gun,

and through the body of the soldier himself. The tree, the gun, and

the body fell into six pieces. It seemed impossible to any man, but it

was true.

When the men and women of Bárfurúsh saw Mullá Ḥusayn’s

great strength and courage, they dropped their guns and ran for their

lives. During all this confusion, Mullá Ḥusayn had disappeared from

sight. His men raced their horses toward Bárfurúsh to try to find

him.

Mullá Ḥusayn had ridden his horse into the town and straight to

the house of the Sa‘ídu’l-‘Ulamá’. Three times he rode his horse

around the house, and as he did so, he called out to him saying,

‘Come out of your house, you coward. You have forced the people

of this town to wage holy war against us, but you have hidden

yourself in your own house. Don’t you know that anyone who

preaches holy war must himself ride in front of his followers so the

can see how brave and strong he is? Come out!’

But the Sa‘ídu’l-‘Ulamá’ did not come out, and when Mullá

Ḥusayn’s men arrived, they found him seated calmly on his horse,

unhurt and waiting for them to come. So happy were his men to see

him that each one of them kissed his feet while he sat on his horse.

As the people of Bárfurúsh came running back into town, they

raised their voices in a call of ‘Peace! Peace!’ On the evening of that

day, Mullá Ḥusayn spoke to a crowd of people. He said to them,

‘O followers of the Prophet Muḥammad, why have you risen against

us? Why do you try to spill our blood? Do you think that this is

approved by God? Did we ever say that your Faith was not true? Is

this the kindness which Muḥammad has commanded you to show to

believers and non-believers? What have we done, for you to try to

kill us? Just think—I, with only my sword, was able to face thousands

of bullets which you shot at me—and yet I was not hit, nor was even

my horse hit. I received only a slight scratch on my face. Do you

know what this means? It means that God was protecting me

through everything, so that you would be able to see that our Faith is

from God.’

That evening, although the people of Bárfurúsh cried for peace,

they would not give Mullá Ḥusayn or his men either bread to eat or

water to drink. When they were refused all help, Mullá Ḥusayn and

his men closed the gates of the yard where they were to sleep for the

night and put themselves into the hands of God.

The hour had come for the evening prayer. As is the custom in

Muslim countries, someone always gets onto a high place and calls

the believers to prayer. Mullá Ḥusayn asked that someone in his

group climb onto the roof of the building and chant the evening

prayer. Everyone present knew that if he climbed up on the roof he

might lose his life, because someone in Bárfurúsh might shoot him

down. But, so in love with the Faith were they, that several offered

to do it. The first to start the prayer was a youth. As soon as he had

said the first words, he was shot down. Mullá Ḥusayn said, ‘Let

another of you continue with the prayer.’ Another young man

climbed onto the roof and started the prayer where the boy had left

off. He too was shot. Then another. Each person was killed while in

prayer. When the third person had been killed, Mullá Ḥusayn

threw open the gate of the yard, jumped on his horse, called to his

men, and they all rode out to attack the enemy. Within a few minutes

the entire crowd was either killed, or they had run away. The street

was filled with the dead people of Bárfurúsh, and God once again

proved to them that He could win over His enemies.

To show how God punishes men who go against His Will, this is

what later happened to the Sa‘ídu’l-‘Ulamá’, who was the cause of

all this trouble. The Sa‘ídu’l-‘Ulamá’ became sick with a terrible

disease. Although he wore heavy furs and kept a fire burning all the

time in his room, he shivered with cold. At the same time, his fever

was so high that he was always dry and could not stop his thirst. He

soon died, and his house, which was very beautiful, was left with no

one in it and no one to take care of it. It fell to pieces, and little by

little the people of the town began to dump all their garbage and

junk in the yards. So well known has become this story that even

today, when people quarrel, they say to each other: ‘I hope the same

thing happens to your house that happened to the house of the

Sa‘ídu’l-‘Ulamá’!’

Mullá Ḥusayn and his companions left Bárfurúsh the next day;

the day after that, at dawn, Mullá Ḥusayn called all his companions

together and told them that they were almost at the end of their

journey. Noticing that some of the men were carrying some of the

enemy’s belongings, he ordered them to leave everything behind. He

said, ‘It is necessary that you arrive at the end of this journey with

nothing except your swords and your horses.’ He then walked ahead

of his men until he came to a shrine, a small building which contained

the tomb of the Muslim saint, Shaykh Ṭabarsí.

10

The night before Mullá Ḥusayn arrived at the Shrine of Shaykh

Ṭabarsí, the guardian of the Shrine had a dream. He dreamt that

the Imám Ḥusayn, one of the Imáms descended from Muḥammad,

arrived at the Shrine with seventy-two soldiers and a large number

of companions. He also dreamt that they stayed at this Shrine for

some time, took part in many fights against their enemies, and won

all those battles. One of the most important parts of the dream was

that the Prophet of God Himself came to the Shrine and blessed the

company. Later, all these things came true.

When Mullá Ḥusayn arrived at the Shrine on the next day, the

guardian immediately recognized him as the Imám Ḥusayn whom

he had seen in his dream. He threw himself at Mullá Ḥusayn’s feet

and kissed them lovingly. He even joined Mullá Ḥusayn’s company,

and was later killed by the enemy in one of the battles.

On the very same day that they arrived at the Shrine of Shaykh

Ṭabarsí, Mullá Ḥusayn decided he must build a fort around this

shrine to protect his men from their enemies. He therefore gave the

plans of the fort to Mírzá Muḥammad-Báqir, who had built the

Bábíyyih. He immediately started to gather the material to build the

fort. But that evening, even before he had started to build, a large

number of horsemen arrived to start a fight. The followers of Mullá

Ḥusayn wasted no time. They raised the cry of ‘Yá Ṣáḥibu’z-

Zamán’\* and in a few minutes they had driven the horsemen away.

Mullá Ḥusayn then ordered that the fort should be built imme-

diately. During the next few days, they were attacked again three

times, but each time they drove the enemy away and went ahead

with their work of building the fort. As soon as the fort was com-

pleted, Mullá Ḥusayn received the news that Bahá’u’lláh had arrived

in the nearby village. Bahá’u’lláh said that He was to visit them that

afternoon, and then they were all to be His guests in the evening.

\* O Lord of the Age!

Can you imagine what happiness must have filled the heart of

Mullá Ḥusayn to have Bahá’u’lláh as his guest? And do you

remember the dream which the guardian of the Shrine had? The

Prophet of God had come to give His blessing to the Fort of Shaykh

Ṭabarsí. Nothing could now go wrong with the plan of God.

As soon as Mullá Ḥusayn had learned that Bahá’u’lláh was

coming, he set everyone to work to get the fort cleaned and ready.

He himself joined them in sweeping the Shrine, and sprinkling water

around the ground to keep down the dust. And when Bahá’u’lláh

arrived, Mullá Ḥusayn took Him into his arms with such love and

tenderness that everyone present wondered Who this man Bahá’u-

’lláh was, and why Mullá Ḥusayn gave Him so much loving attention.

You see, no one yet knew Who Bahá’u’lláh was. Their love was still

for the Báb and none other. But as Bahá’u’lláh began to speak to

them, they began to see how wonderful He was. However, none of

the men realized that He was to be a Prophet of God.

While Bahá’u’lláh was visiting the fort, He inspected the work, said

He was pleased with everything, and then explained some things to

Mullá Ḥusayn which would help to make the men more comfortable

and safe. Then He said, ‘The one thing this fort and company require

is the presence of Quddús.’ Bahá’u’lláh knew that if Quddús were

there, everything would be perfect. So He told Mullá Ḥusayn to

send Mullá Mihdí and six men to the town of Sárí to demand the

release of Quddús from the home of his relative where he was kept.

Before Bahá’u’lláh left the fort, He spoke to everyone assuring

them that, no matter what happened at Shaykh Ṭabarsí, they must

be patient and accept the will of the Almighty. ‘If it be His will,’

He added, ‘We shall once again visit you at this same spot, and shall

lend you Our assistance. You have been chosen of God to be the

vanguard of His host and the establishers of His Faith. His host verily

will conquer. Whatever may befall, victory is yours, a victory which

is complete and certain.’ With these words, He left the fort and

returned to Tihrán.

11

Before Quddús arrived at the fort, Mullá Ḥusayn called all his

followers together and told them that Quddús was coming. He told

them that both the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh wanted Quddús to be there,

and that they must behave towards Quddús as if he were the Báb

Himself. ‘As for myself,’ he said, ‘you must consider me his lowly

servant. You must obey Quddús so completely that even if he were

to tell you that you must kill me, you must obey without hesitation.

If you hesitate, you will be untrue to your Faith. You must not talk

to him unless he invites you to. You must give up your own wishes

and desires, and follow his plans and his commands. You must act

in such a way that I will be proud of you.’

When a messenger brought word that Quddús was soon to arrive

at the fort, Mullá Ḥusayn jumped to his feet and took about a

hundred of his companions to meet him. He placed two candles in

the hands of each man, lighted them himself, and off they went

marching into the night. In the forest, they met Quddús and lighted

his way back to the fort, singing a hymn with the words, ‘Holy, holy

the Lord our God, the Lord of the angels and the spirit!’

When Quddús arrived at the fort, his first words were a prophecy

of the Qur’án about the Promised One. Straight after that, he

mentioned Bahá’u’lláh, and asked Mullá Ḥusayn about Him. Mullá

Ḥusayn told Quddús that Bahá’u’lláh would return to the fort at a

later time, if God willed.

From this point on in the life of Mullá Ḥusayn, he became the

simple servant of Quddús. Whatever Quddús wanted him to do, he

did with great joy and without question. Many a night, Mullá

Ḥusayn would walk around and around the place where Quddús lay

asleep, and he chanted special prayers for him. On one of those

nights he told one of the companions, who had been quietly praying,

not to be troubled by the meanings of the words, but to arise with

him and try to become a martyr. ‘Then you will be able to under-

stand, when the year ‘80 comes, the secret of the things which now

lie hidden from you’, said Mullá Ḥusayn. The year ‘80 was 1863,\*

the year when Bahá’u’lláh made His declaration to the world. So

great was Mullá Ḥusayn’s spirit and knowledge that he immediately

swept away everyone’s fears.

There were many reasons during those next few weeks for the

companions of Mullá Ḥusayn and Quddús to be afraid and to doubt.

The Sa‘ídu’l-‘Ulamá’ wanted all the Bábís killed, so most people

living near the fort would not help them. A few people did, however,

help, but when the Shah sent soldiers, the bread supply to the fort

was cut off, and later, the water supply too. Many times, the Bábís

were attacked, and many men died while defending the fort.

Prince Mihdí-Qulí Mírzá came with an army to the fort. He sent

a messenger to ask Mullá Ḥusayn why they had built the Fort,

Mullá Ḥusayn told the Prince, ‘We have no thought of fighting the

Government. Our Cause is a religious one, and we are being attacked

by people who are being led by the ministers of religion. We can

prove to anyone that our Message is the Truth from God. If you

want to know the Truth, bring the leaders of religion from the towns

of Sári and Bárfurúsh to this fort. We will prove everything to you

from the Qur’án. Let the Prince himself decide if our Cause is true or

false.’

(At a later time, Bahá’u’lláh taught that it is no longer permitted

to use the sword as a means of settling religious disputes. In fact,

Bahá’ís do not use weapons at all unless the Government requires

them to. But, during the time of the Báb, it was permitted to defend

oneself with weapons.)

But instead of bringing the religious leaders, the Prince attacked

the fort.

With the signal ‘Mount your steeds, O heroes of God!’, Quddús,

followed by Mullá Ḥusayn, led two hundred and two of their men

into the fight. They rode in the direction of Vás-Kas, where the

\* The year 1280 (’80 for short) in the Muslim calendar is the year 1863–4 in the

Christian calendar.

Prince was quartered. Although the enemy tried to stop them, the

Bábís rode as though there were no one in the way. Mullá Ḥusayn

led the way, and rode right through the gate and into the private

rooms of the Prince. The Prince was so afraid that he jumped out the

back window and ran away without his shoes! His men ran away,

also, and two other princes were killed in the fighting. The Bábís

found containers full of gold and silver, but did not touch them. All

they took was a pot of gunpowder and the Prince’s favourite sword.

This was given to Mullá Ḥusayn.

While the Bábís were reorganizing themselves on the field, Mullá

Ḥusayn watched the enemy in case of another attack. Suddenly, the

enemy came riding toward them again. The men raised the cry of

‘Yá Ṣáḥibu’z-Zamán!’ and Mullá Ḥusayn rode in one direction

while Quddús and his companions rode in another. So well known

was Mullá Ḥusayn for his strength and courage in using the sword

that the enemy turned away from him and went to Quddús instead.

All at once they fired a thousand bullets, and Quddús was hit in the

mouth by one of them. As soon as Mullá Ḥusayn heard the sound of

the guns, he turned his horse in the direction of Quddús to help him.

When Mullá Ḥusayn saw that Quddús had been hurt and the blood

was dripping from his mouth, he raised his hands and was about to

beat himself, when Quddús made him stop. Then Mullá Ḥusayn,

filled with more strength than he had ever felt before, took the sword

of Quddús in one hand and the sword of the Prince in the other.

With a hundred and ten men behind him, he went into the battle

swinging both swords. He fought so hard and so well that within

thirty minutes, the entire army of the Prince was beaten and ran

away.

The Sháh was surprised by the news that the Prince had lost the

fight, and so he sent another army to help him. This army built seven

walls around the Fort of Shaykh Ṭabarsí . As the Bábís were running

out of water, Mullá Ḥusayn gave the order to dig a well. On the day

they were to finish the well, Mullá Ḥusayn said: ‘Today we shall all

have enough water for a bath. We must make ourselves clean,

because soon we shall taste the cup of martyrdom. All of you who

are willing to die for the Almighty must now prepare yourselves and

wait for the hour of attack. This night, before the hour of dawn, all

those who wish may join me and rush forward to meet the enemy,

and to return forever to our Beloved.’

That afternoon, Mullá Ḥusayn washed himself, put on new

clothes, wrapped the Báb’s green turban around his head, and waited

for the final hour. He was completely happy, and spent the time with

his companions giving them joy and courage. He spent some time

alone with Quddús, and told Quddús all the things that were in his

heart. Then, soon after midnight, as soon as he saw the morning star

he jumped to his feet, climbed on his horse, and gave the signal to

open the gates of the fort. Behind him three hundred and thirteen

men rushed out to meet the enemy. Once again, the cry of ‘Yá

Ṣáḥibu’z-Zamán!’ filled the forest around them.

Mullá Ḥusayn rushed forward and within a short time he and his

men had ruined all seven of the walls built by the enemy. The three

armies of the Sháh—one led by the Prince and another by ‘Abbás-

Qulí Khán—were both surprised and overcome. But ‘Abbás-Qulí

Khán had climbed a tree, and was waiting for his chance to kill

whoever came near. He could see Mullá Ḥusayn and the Bábís

fighting because of the light which came from their guns. But no one

could see ‘Abbás-Qulí Khán in the tree because it was dark.

Suddenly, the horse which Mullá Ḥusayn was riding got caught up

in the rope of a tent, and before the horse was able to get away,

‘Abbás-Qulí Khán shot a bullet at Mullá Ḥusayn’s chest. Although

‘Abbás-Qulí Khán did not know who he had shot, he was successful.

Mullá Ḥusayn got off his horse bleeding, tried to walk a few steps,

but fell to the ground. Two of his companions saw him fall and

carried him back to the Fort. He seemed to be unconscious.

As soon as Mullá Ḥusayn was brought into the Fort, Quddús gave

orders to be left alone with him. Everyone left Mullá Ḥusayn and

Quddús alone in his room, but they stood outside the door and

waited. Soon they were surprised to hear Mullá Ḥusayn answering

[Illustration]

questions asked by Quddús. One of the men had been looking

through a crack in the door and saw Quddús call to Mullá Ḥusayn.

As soon as his name was called, Mullá Ḥusayn rose up, and then sat

himself on his knees in front of Quddús as he usually did. With his

head bowed and his eyes down, he listened to everything Quddús

said. One of the bits of conversation which was overheard was this:

Quddús said to Mullá Ḥusayn, ‘You have hurried to leave this world,

and you are leaving me alone against the enemy. If it pleases God,

I will join you in a short time, and I shall also taste the sweetness of

being in heaven.’ All that could be heard of Mullá Ḥusayn’s answer

was: ‘May my life be given for you. Are you well pleased with me?’

For two hours, Mullá Ḥusayn and Quddús conversed with each

other, but no one knows what they said. After a long time, Quddús

opened the door to his companions and said, ‘I have said my last

goodbye to Mullá Ḥusayn. I have told him many things which I

could not tell him before.’ When they went to where Mullá Ḥusayn

lay, he was dead, but there was a little smile still on his face, and he

looked so peaceful it seemed as though he had only fallen asleep.

Quddús himself took care of Mullá Ḥusayn’s body. He put his

own shirt on Mullá Ḥusayn and gave the order for him to be buried

to the south of, and next to, the Shrine of Shaykh Ṭabarsí. Quddús’

last words to Mullá Ḥusayn before he was buried were: ‘Well is it

with you to have remained faithful to the Covenant of God to your

last hour. I pray God that there will never be a division between you

and me.’ He then kissed the eyes and the forehead of Mullá Ḥusayn,

and laid the body in the grave himself. The seven believers standing

near were so moved that they wept. He told everyone there that they

must keep secret the place where Mullá Ḥusayn was buried. He then

commanded that the thirty-six men who had been martyred that

day be buried on the north side of the Shrine—all in one grave. And

his final word to them was: ‘Let the loved ones of God learn from the

example of these martyrs of our Faith. Let them be and remain as

united in life as these are now in death.’

Mullá Ḥusayn

is shot.

# Epilogue

The time from the day when Mullá Ḥusayn was first attacked by his

enemies to the day of his martyrdom was one hundred and sixteen

days. The number of martyrs killed during those one hundred and

sixteen days was seventy-two. In four different battles, Mullá Ḥusayn

had shown such courage and power that it could have only come

from God. He was thirty-six years old when he died. At the age of

eighteen, he first met Siyyid Káẓim. For nine years he studied under

him. The other nine years of his life were spent in teaching and

protecting the Faith of God against its enemies.

When the Báb learned of Mullá Ḥusayn’s death, He wrote praises

and prayers for him which would equal three times the length of the

Qur’án. In one of His Tablets, the Báb wrote that the very dust

where the body of Mullá Ḥusayn lies buried can bring happiness to

the down-hearted and healing to the sick. In the *Kitáb-i-Íqán*,

Bahá’u’lláh pays him the highest tribute. He wrote: ‘But for him,

God would not have been established upon the seat of His mercy,

nor have ascended the throne of eternal glory!’

Mullá Ḥusayn is one of the greatest men in the history of the

Bahá’í Faith and his memory lives today and will live for hundreds

of years as an inspiration and an example for all who walk in the

path of God.

# Sources

The following books were consulted in the writing of this story of Mullá

Ḥusayn:

Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í World Faith* (Wilmette, 1956)

Nabíl, *The Dawn-Breakers* (Wilmette, 1932)